

Firrhill Health & Social Care Centre: Minutes of Meeting 10/06/2011

In attendance: Susan Goldsmith (Director of Finance at NHS Lothian)
Robert Aitken (General Manager NHS Lothian)
Steven Whitton (Project Manager NHS Lothian)
Monica Boyle (Head of Social Care Performance at CEC)
Dr Avis McFarlane (representing Dr Cowan, Head of Firrhill Medical Centre)

Councillor Jason Rust, Councillor Elaine Aitken, Councillor Eric Barry, Sarah Boyack MSP, Heather Levy: Chair of Firrhill CC, Norman Tinlin: Secretary Fairmilehead CC, Alison Elfick: Treasurer Fairmilehead CC

Firrhill CC Members: Peggy Wright; Jim Napier, Pauline Podd, Grace Hunter, Al Hunter

Other members of the Public

Councillor Rust opened the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance. He introduced the representatives of NHS Lothian and Monica Boyle from City of Edinburgh Council. Robert Aitken and his colleagues were then invited to address the meeting and take questions from local constituents.

RA: Thanked everyone for their attendance and drew attention to the informal slide presentation that had been handed out. He then went on to summarise the presentation:

1. Opening of multi-purpose Health & Social Care Centre will give us the opportunity to bring many services together in one hub.
2. Site available for development (near Tesco) is adjacent to current Firrhill Medical Centre.
3. 3 GP Practices to be brought together (Craiglockhart; Oxgangs Path; Firrhill)
4. Existing Firrhill Medical Centre would remain with new build being joined onto it
5. Capital Funding has become a major issue
6. For as long as the project is on-going, NHS Lothian will need to continually consider our options
7. Activity on site with regards to potential traffic and road safety issues is a significant consideration

Questions & Answers

Q: Was there not already £9 million worth of funding secured?

A: Scottish Futures Trust has identified this project as one they want to work. They do not supply funding for us, they secure it. We no longer have the authority to spend the money that you are speaking of. **Susan Goldsmith**

Q: It seemed that these plans had been approved two years ago. What priority do you give the proposed development?

A: The priority order is as follows: Wester Hailes, Gullane and then Firrhill. The route of funding the project will determine the timescale. **Susan Goldsmith**

Q: Where does Muirhouse fit into the priority order? **Jason Rust**

A: We are still working with the Council but it is something we will have to do something about due to the population demographic. In terms of priority, plans are not as advanced as Firrhill. **Susan Goldsmith**

General point: Locally there are 400 more houses and full school rolls which indicate a growing community.

Q: Is NHS Lothian still as committed to the project and what services are being considered? **Elaine Aitken**

A: Physiotherapy, Podiatry and Paediatrics. **Robert Aitken**

Q: What work will be done regarding issues on traffic and road safety? **Elaine Aitken**

A: Work will have to be done with Community Councils and all relevant officials. **Robert Aitken**

General point: We have 500 new families moving into the area. We're also the only area in the City without a dedicated facility.

Q: Where is the logic in government fronting money to investigate development without having secure funding in place?

A: So we can put the project to the market (Hub-Co). Hub-Co is made up of private and public sector businesses and they are the potential investors in this project. **Susan Goldsmith**

Q: What is the situation regarding Physiotherapy unit in development?

A: There will be a re-consideration based on re-location of services. **Robert Aitken**

Q: We keep hearing the words, sooner rather than later for this project. Why do the timescales keep changing? **Eric Barry**

A: We have had to prioritise the Wester Hailes and Gullane projects. Also, the issue of funding has impacted upon us. Wester Hailes was funded differently and was at an advanced stage before the economic downturn **Susan Goldsmith**

Q: I fear now that all we are going to get is an amalgamated doctors' practice which was not the idea of this project. **Eric Barry**

A: This is not the intention. We do however have to go back through the detail of the original plan. **Robert Aitken**

A: NHS Lothian remains fully committed. We are facing a different financial reality now than when we agreed on the original plan for service provision. We have to go back and look at what services are financially viable for the development. **Susan Goldsmith**

Q: Hypothetically speaking, if you got the funding tomorrow, how long would it take for the development to be built?

A: Around 18 months. **Steven Whitton**

Q: How can you procure funding for a project when you do not know what you want to buy?

A: Working alongside Hub-Co will ensure that we can provide the best possible development with funding allocated. **Susan Goldsmith**

Q: I thought Hub-Co weren't interested in the Firrhill project on its own? Wasn't our project to be piggybacked on to Muirhouse?

A: This is correct but it does not necessarily have to be Muirhouse. Hub-Co is designed to bundle projects. **Susan Goldsmith**

Q: What Council services will be part of the development?

A: We are looking at Adult Social Care and Day services for older people. We are exploring other localities. There is the potential to integrate other services if we have the opportunity to do so. **Monica Boyle**

Q: What do the Doctors think of all this?

A: It is completely unacceptable. **Doctor Avis McFarlane**

Q: What are the next steps? **Jason Rust**

A: We will have to get together over next couple of months to have transparent debate over the options for services. **Robert Aitken**

Q: Where do we stand in relation to planning? **Jason Rust**

A: The site has been earmarked for some time. Car parking spaces, road layouts, entering and exiting have been talked about. We however have no detail for planning at this moment. The site is potentially over-developed. **Steven Whitton**

Councillor Rust closed the meeting by again thanking everybody for their attendance. He believed that the feeling was that there had been a lack of engagement between NHS Lothian, CEC and local Community Councils. He stated that Councillors were going to be very pro-active in pressing for this to be taken forward. Lothian Regional MSPs David Mclellachie and Sarah Boyack will be monitoring the issue at Parliamentary level.